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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Health Resources and Services Administration

“Low-Income Levels” Used for Various Health Professions and Nursing Programs

Authorized in Titles III, VII, and VIII of the Public Health Service Act

AGENCY: Health Resources and Services Administration, HHS.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) is updating income levels used to identify a “low-income family” for the purpose of determining eligibility for programs that provide health professions and nursing training to individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. These various programs are authorized in Titles III, VII, and VIII of the Public Health Service Act.

The Department periodically publishes in the Federal Register low-income levels to be used by institutions receiving grants and cooperative agreements in order to determine individual eligibility for programs providing training for (1) disadvantaged individuals, (2) individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, or (3) individuals from low-income families.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Many health professions and nursing grant and cooperative agreement awardees use the low-income levels to determine whether potential

program participants are from an economically disadvantaged background and would be eligible to participate in the program, as well as to determine the amount of funding the individual receives. Federal agencies generally make awards to: accredited schools of medicine, osteopathic medicine, public health, dentistry, veterinary medicine, optometry, pharmacy, allied health, podiatric medicine, nursing, and chiropractic; public or private nonprofit schools which offer graduate programs in behavioral health and mental health practice; and other public or private nonprofit health or education entities to assist the disadvantaged to enter and graduate from health professions and nursing schools. Some programs provide for the repayment of health professions or nursing education loans for disadvantaged students.

The Secretary defines a “low-income family/household” for programs included in Titles III, VII, and VIII of the Public Health Service Act as having an annual income that does not exceed 200 percent of the Department’s poverty guidelines. A family is a group of two or more individuals related by birth, marriage, or adoption who live together. On June 26, 2013, in *U.S. v. Windsor*, 133 S. Ct. 2675 (2013), the Supreme Court held that section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act, which prohibited federal recognition of same-sex spouses and same-sex marriages, was unconstitutional. In light of this decision, please note that in determining eligibility for these programs, same-sex marriages and same-sex spouses will be recognized on equal terms with opposite-sex marriages and opposite-sex spouses, regardless of where the couple resides. This approach is consistent with a post-Windsor policy of treating same-sex marriages on the same terms as opposite sex marriages to the greatest extent reasonably possible. Thus, a “family or household” includes same-sex spouses that are legally married in a jurisdiction that recognizes same-sex marriage regardless of whether the same-sex spouses live

in a jurisdiction that recognizes same-sex marriage or a jurisdiction that does not recognize same-sex marriage as well as the family members that result from such same sex-marriage.

Most HRSA programs use the income of a student's parents to compute low-income status. However, a "household" may potentially be only one person. Other HRSA programs, depending upon the legislative intent of the program, the programmatic purpose related to income level, as well as the age and circumstances of the participant, will apply these low-income standards to the individual student to determine eligibility, as long as he or she is not listed as a dependent on the tax form of his or her parent(s). Each program announces the rationale and choice of methodology for determining low-income levels in program guidance.

The Secretary annually adjusts the low-income levels based on the Department's poverty guidelines and makes them available to persons responsible for administering the applicable programs. The Department's poverty guidelines are based on poverty thresholds published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, adjusted annually for changes in the Consumer Price Index. The income figures that follow have been updated to reflect the Department's 2015 poverty guidelines as published in 80 FR 3236 (January 22, 2015).

LOW-INCOME LEVELS BASED ON THE 2015 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR THE 48
CONTIGUOUS STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Persons in family/household*	Income Level**
1	\$23,540
2	\$31,860
3	\$40,180

4	\$48,500
5	\$56,820
6	\$65,140
7	\$73,460
8	\$81,780

For families with more than 8 persons, add \$8,320 for each additional person.

LOW-INCOME LEVELS BASED ON THE 2015 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR ALASKA

Persons in family/household*	Income Level**
1	\$29,440
2	\$39,840
3	\$50,240
4	\$60,640
5	\$71,040
6	\$81,440
7	\$91,840
8	\$102,240

For families with more than 8 persons, add \$10,400 for each additional person.

LOW-INCOME LEVELS BASED ON THE 2015 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR HAWAII

Persons in family/household*	Income Level**
1	\$27,100

2	\$36,660
3	\$46,220
4	\$55,780
5	\$65,340
6	\$74,900
7	\$84,460
8	\$94,020

For families with more than 8 persons, add \$9,560 for each additional person.

*Includes only dependents listed on federal income tax forms.

**Adjusted gross income for calendar year 2014.

Separate poverty guideline figures for Alaska and Hawaii reflect Office of Economic Opportunity administrative practice beginning in the 1966-1970 period. (Note that the Census Bureau poverty thresholds – the version of the poverty measure used for statistical purposes – have never had separate figures for Alaska and Hawaii.) The poverty guidelines are not defined for Puerto Rico or other outlying jurisdictions. Puerto Rico and other outlying jurisdictions shall use income guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia.

Dated: March 6, 2015.

Mary K. Wakefield,
Administrator.

